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Donovan Acts as Plan Fails at Bay of Pigs

Reveals Kennedy's Appreciation in Release of 1,113 Prisoners from Castro's Cuba

Myths and mystery have grown out of James B. Donovan's success in negotiating the exchange of a Russian master spy for an American spy pilot and the release of 1,113 Bay of Pigs prisoners from Castro's dungeons. The truth, however, is as fascinating as any fiction. This is the third of a series in which THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE presents the facts, both of the negotiations and the controversial Bay of Pigs tragedy itself.

BY CHESLY MANLY

FIDEL CASTRO'S release of 1,113 Cuban prisoners captured in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion attempt, in exchange for 53 million dollars worth of drugs and baby food, was negotiated by James B. Donovan. The Kennedy administration aided this ransom deal because of what Donovan describes as a sense of "moral responsibility" for the Bay of Pigs tragedy.

"President Kennedy called me after it was over and congratulated me, and I feel sure that he felt that it was discharging what he regarded as a very heavy moral obligation on his part," Donovan told this reporter.

Because of his success in negotiating the exchange of Rudolf Abel, Russian super spy, for Francis Gary Powers, the American U-2 spy pilot, Donovan, in June, 1962, was urged by members of the Cuban Families committee to undertake negotiations with Castro for the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners.

"What happened at the Bay of Pigs," Donovan said in an interview, "was the fact that these people's sons had been recruited by the United States, had been sent in with the approval of the United States, and then—without getting into detail—had been literally abandoned by the United States and permitted to run out of ammunition on the beach, and they had been imprisoned for 15 months."

Donovan was asked whether he agreed, as some have charged, that President Kennedy's sense of moral responsibility amounted to a feeling of guilt.

"Well, I think 'guilt' could be used but it's just another way of expressing the same thing," Donovan replied.

Reviews Disaster at Cuba's Bay of Pigs

A brief review of the Bay of Pigs disaster, in which before taking up Donovan's negotiations with Castro. The purported

inside story is told from the Kennedy administration's standpoint in "A Thousand Days," by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., and "The Bay of Pigs," by Theodore Sorensen, both of whom were White House assistants. Schlesinger, a professional historian, was directly involved in the Bay of Pigs affair and his account is better than Sorensen's.

Both authors agree that the Bay of Pigs invasion, on April 17, 1961, by about 1,400 Cuban exiles, who had been trained at a base in Guatemala, could not have succeeded without effective air cover and that President Kennedy had excluded participation by United States ground or air forces. Under the Kennedy limitation, the United States would take the Cuban brigade to the beaches and that would be all.

A significant fact which is not recognized—indeed is denied—by both Schlesinger and Sorensen is that United States air cover was included in the invasion plan inherited by the Kennedy administration from the Eisenhower administration.

Sorensen Says Air Corps Was Never in the Plan

Sorensen simply says air cover was never in the plan. Schlesinger says the Eisenhower administration's "ground rule" prohibited "United States participation in combat."

Neither author even mentions the late Whiting Willauer, who was in charge of planning for the Cuban invasion under the Eisenhower administration.

As ambassador to Honduras, Willauer had directed planning for the operation in which anti-communist exiles led by Col. Carlos Castillo Armas overthrew the communist-dominated Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954.

He testified under oath before the Senate internal security subcommittee that when the Eisenhower administration put him in charge of preparations for the Cuban invasion he enlisted the cooperation of the joint chiefs of staff and was assured



Bowles (left) and Burke

to you anymore." Finally, just before the Bay of Pigs landing, a minor state department functionary called him and told him he had been fired.

Schlesinger reports that in January, 1961, "a JCS paper, tacitly questioning the ban on United States participation in military operations, discussed possible levels of involvement." But he says this paper was "shuffled aside in the confusion of the changeover."

He reports that Gen. Lemnitzer, chairman of the JCS, "tried to renew discussion of alternatives ranging from minimum to maximum United States involvement" when the plan was exposed to leading members of the new administration on Jan. 22. But when President Kennedy reviewed the plan six days later, according to Schlesinger "the ground rule against United States participation was still to prevail."

Reports Talk with Kennedy

Schlesinger gives this account of a conversation he had with President Kennedy:

"So far as the operation itself was concerned, he felt, as he told me that afternoon, that he had successfully fired it



Rusk (left) and Willauer

by the JCS that the United States would provide air cover for the operation.

Willauer testified that his "junior partner" in the project was Tracy Barnes, of the Central Intelligence Agency. On Jan. 26, 1961, he said, Dean Rusk, the new secretary of state, and Chester Bowles, the new undersecretary, asked him to continue as coordinator of the project.

Realizes the Squeeze Is On

Willauer soon realized, however, that he was being squeezed out. Rusk, Bowles, and other top state department officials refused to see him. About the middle of February he called and said, "We can't talk